
Beacon Lights

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All information and letters pertaining to the contents of the *Beacon Lights* mail to (e-mail if at all possible, or computer disks preferred):

EDITORIAL OFFICE

John Huizenga
621 Williams
Randolph, WI 53956
Phone: (920)326-6186
Internet: jhui@internetwis.com

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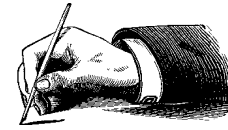
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Beacon Lights
P.O. Box 375
Jenison, MI 49428

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Parental Involvement in Christian Education

by John Huizenga

For many parents, sending the children off to school is a great relief. This may be especially true for the mothers who labor all day at home caring for and nurturing the children. It may be a relief for both parents to know that the teacher reveals God in the classroom as he teaches from the “most elegant book” of creation (Belgic Confession article 2), and that Christian behavior is expected and nurtured.

Certainly, parents thank God for the peace of mind knowing that their children receive a Christian education, but let’s go a bit further. It may be a comfort for both parents when they can send their children to a school knowing the children are taught the Bible lessons that they neglected to teach. Now father feels that he does not have to be so diligent with family devotions. Now the school can guide their children in the way God would have them go. Now father can relax and watch TV in the evenings because his children have been taught at school. Mother can direct her attention to a career or do something for herself. The teacher can do the educating. That is what he is paid to do. If the children don’t learn and begin to sow wild oats, then the teacher is to blame.

It is wrong and devastating to Christian education when parents send their children off to school with the attitude that now their hands have been freed from educational responsibilities. It is wrong to think that you can pay money to have someone else take over your responsibility to instruct your children. God clearly reveals to parents, that the father must “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). And again in Deuteronomy 6:6-7 “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” The Catechism in Lord’s Day 38 also teaches that the fourth commandment involves maintaining Christian schools. Parents must be integrally involved in the upbringing, educating and nurturing of their children.

Perhaps you say, “I will be diligent to teach my child the fear of the Lord, but it is not my job to teach them math and language. My role in training up my child is as the Baptism Formula states: to ‘see these children ... instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of your power.’ Article 21 of the Church Order states that the parents have their children instructed in good Christian schools. All I need to know is that my children are in a good Christian school. When they are off to school, I can focus on my own work. My job of instructing the children is finished for the day.”

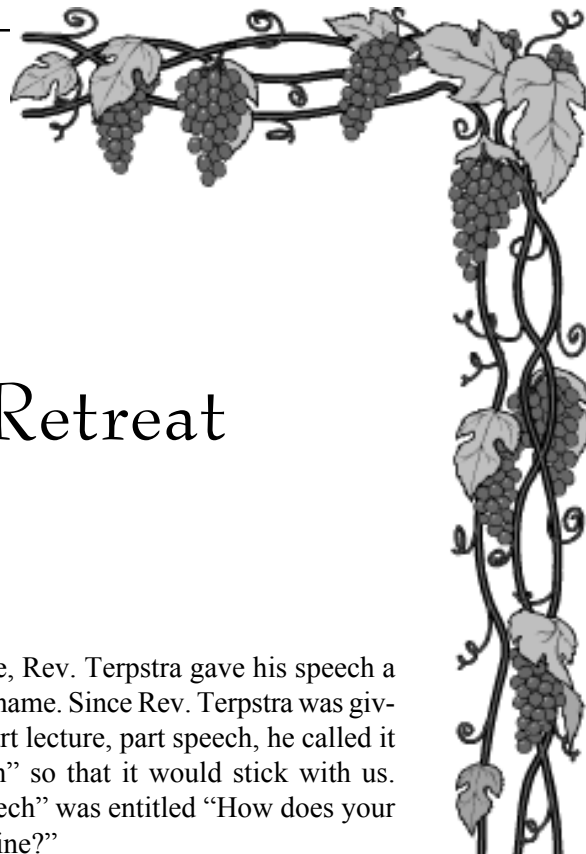
Certainly, the involvement of parents in education begins with the financial support of the school, but it must go much further. Parents must be busy instructing their children at home. Christian education will quickly fail where parents neglect spiritual instruction and expect the school to provide all the instruction of their children. Christian education will quickly fail if parents do not provide a strong covenant home life and expect the school to fix all the problems their children have as a result of their neglect. The parents must extend their lives into the classroom by sending children with the spiritual tools necessary for receiving a Christian education. There is no way around this plain teaching of Scripture quoted earlier.

Involvement of parents in education must also continue the moment that the children return from school. It is essential for Christian education that at least one parent be home when the children come home. In fact, the parents should be waiting and ready for them, not busy working on something else. Parents need to understand that their primary job and calling in life is to train up their children. Be ready to listen to your children tell about their day. Just as you reached into the classroom at the beginning of the day by preparing the children for it, you reach in again at the end to provide a seamless transition to home life. Talk with them about their social interaction with classmates, look over their work, be ready to begin helping them with homework. Have the meal prepared as much as possible so you can devote yourself to them. The lives of your children, after all is your chief calling, it is **not** the house, the clothing, the yard, or any other job.

The time when children return home is prime educational time because that is when the parents can become intimately involved with the education received at school. Think of it like this: the teacher has worked all day in harmony with your goals to teach the things necessary for daily life. Your children, as tender young trees, have been loaded with essential minerals that you as a parent may have a very difficult time providing yourself. The parent now has the great responsibility to take these precious resources, help the children absorb them, confirm their importance, water them with sound spiritual guidance, and further guide the rapid growth. If the parents are not interested in what they learned, then the children will think that it is not important and not worth learning. If you give over your child's prime educational time to the television, you give it to the powerful influence of the ungodly world. The spiritual substance of their education will be washed away, and the rest will produce wild errant growth. The day's education will have been wasted.

Whenever possible, become involved with the education of your children even while they are at school. The mother whose youngest child has now gone to school should not fill her empty day with a secular job, but rather should see if there is some time that could be spent directly at school helping the teacher. Freely offer your time. Offer some suggestions and do not give up if your offer is not accepted right away. Both parents should be ready and prepare for parent/teacher conferences. Fathers *must* be present. It is especially his calling to educate, and he must take every opportunity possible to get involve.

When parents truly understand their calling to train up their children in the fear of the Lord, they will not feel relieved of their duties when they send them off to school. If anything, the feeling of responsibility should be heightened. The progress of their children in academics, their spiritual development in relation to what they learn, their behavior toward the teacher and other students should weigh upon the hearts of parents. When children are in school, their development is being pushed to new levels. The parents must feel a great urgency to keep up with them and carefully monitor their progress. If parents are not involved, then our education ceases to be biblical. ❖



1999 New Jersey Retreat

by Mark Feenstra

The young adults retreat sponsored by the Wycoff Protestant Reformed young adults of New Jersey was held May 24-26, 1999. The retreat was located at Harvey Cedars Bible Conference Center on Long Beach Island, New Jersey. About 40 young adults from the United States and Canada attended.

The retreaters arrived at the church on the preceding Saturday. After supper at the church, we spent the night at various homes of the congregation. Sunday morning, Rev. Terpstra preached on Acts 2:37-41, "Pentecost's Powerful Fruit." Sunday evening, Prof. Dykstra preached on John 14:18, "Jesus' Promise to Distressed Children." A singspiration followed the evening service.

Monday we took a coach bus from the church to New York City. There we rode the Circle Line Tour boat for a foggy view of Manhattan Island. After the boat tour, we were able to walk down 5th Avenue in the rain! Although we all were soaked, it was great fun. From New York City we traveled to Harvey Cedars. Once we arrived, we were able to move into our rooms. After settling in, we attended the first speech, which was by Prof. Dykstra. Since it was not quite a lecture or a sermon, Prof. Dykstra called it a "lermon." His "lermon" was entitled "Dating in the Light of Christ."

On Tuesday morning we split into discussion groups. The discussion topic was feminism. We discussed topics such as the role of women in the workplace and whether women should go to college. In the afternoon we headed for the beach. Aside from being quite windy, the weather was good. The ocean was numbing, but some braved the cold and swam anyway. In the evening we heard Rev. Terpstra's speech. Following Prof. Dykstra's

example, Rev. Terpstra gave his speech a special name. Since Rev. Terpstra was giving a part lecture, part speech, he called it a "leech" so that it would stick with us. The "leech" was entitled "How does your light shine?"

Right after breakfast on Wednesday morning, we went to the chapel for Rev. VanderWal's speech. Rev. VanderWal looked back to his seminary days for a special name for his speech. He called it a Word of Edification, or WOE. This was a good name because the WOE was entitled "Into the Darkness of the World." After the speech, we joined our discussion groups. We discussed the meaning of love, dating a non-Protestant Reformed individual, and witnessing to the world. In the afternoon, we had the choice of going to the beach, visiting nearby Surf City, or touring the lighthouse. Wednesday night, while most went to bed after free time, some of us stayed up all night playing games so that we could watch the sun rise over the Atlantic Ocean!

We packed up and left Harvey Cedars on Thursday morning and rode the coach bus back to Wycoff. After saying our good-byes, most of us left for home on Thursday afternoon.

The retreat was very enjoyable and very spiritually edifying for everyone. We would like to thank the Wycoff congregation for all their hard work in putting this retreat together. ❖

Mark is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

Contemporary Worship

Dear Editor,

I have recently read the April 1999 copy of the *Beacon Lights* in my parent's house. One article that I found very interesting was the one written by Kristin Brands, "In the Beauty of Holiness."

After reading this particular article, I was very disturbed with what Kristin, and assumably the people who published this magazine believe about worshipping God. Correct me if I am wrong. Kristin wrote that the Bible must be the central part of your worship, and that you do not tolerate worship which He has not commanded. You believe that God commands you to come before Him, worship Him, bow down and kneel before Him (95:6) but you believe that God forbids His children to clap, shout, dance and sing before Him. Is there a possibility that you have missed Psalm 150?

"Praise ye the LORD!

Praise God in His sanctuary;

Praise Him in the firmament of His power

Praise Him for His might acts:

Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!

Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;

Praise Him with the psaltery and the harp!

Praise Him with the timbrel and dance:

Praise Him with stringed instruments and organs!

Praise Him upon the loud cymbals;

Praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals.

Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD!"

or Psalm 33: 3: "Sing unto him a new song, play skillfully with a loud noise." or Psalm 47:1, 2: "O clap your hands, all ye people, shout to God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible, he is a great King over all the earth." I also lift up my hands to God

in submission, repentance, praise and prayer, Lamentations 3:40-42: "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens." and Psalm 63:3, 4: "Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name."

I Timothy 2:8: "I will therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting..."

Psalm 141:2: "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."

Nehemiah 8:6: "And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen! with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground."

There are so many more passages in reference to praising God, that I am in awe of how much He really has provided for His children in reference to worship. We were created for worship! When I am worshipping God with my fellow believers, I cannot contain my thankfulness for what God has done in sending His Son, Jesus, to die...for me. I am in awe because I do not deserve it. Every step of my life, God has lead me, and when I read this article that said the way I worship is shallow, and suggests that God has not introduced it, I couldn't help but respond. I was offended to hear that I thought of God as a cream puff and big buddy. God IS, however, my Father in Heaven and I sincerely believe that as my Father, He loves it when His name is praised, whether it be through contemporary styles of worship or any other ways that humans worship their creator. I do not doubt

that you do indeed worship God, but when your judgment on worship is condemning me, and anyone else who worships according to what I read in the Psalms, I need to hold you accountable to that. Matthew 7:1-2 “Judge not that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

I do ask you one question. If you believe the Bible, why don't you practice it in its entirety? I know you do not bow down on your knees in worship, and I know you do not lift up your hands to God in worship. Where is your acceptance of God's leading us in worship when you openly criticize and condemn churches who have returned to the heart of worship? It's all about God and what He has commanded. He has created humans with

deeply felt emotions and to worship Him IS to bow down before Him with everything He has created in us as humans, emotions included. If I came into His presence without my emotions, I would not be human!!! Do you follow God's instructions in their entirety or in part?

I am praying for your denomination AND mine that we both see God's leading, and hear His voice in every matter, including worship.

Please respond if God puts it in your heart to do so.

In Christ,

A child of the King

Response . . .

Dear Robyn,

I appreciate your Scripture-backed argument. The article to which you responded was critical of contemporary forms of worship that includes shouting, dancing, clapping, and singing. You point out with numerous texts that the worship by the people of God recorded in Scripture includes shouting, singing, dancing, and clapping. You conclude that the author of the article and the “*Beacon Lights*” staff are ignorant of what God says about worship and are judging contemporary worship unfairly.

You raise a very important question: “If you believe the Bible, why don't you practice it in its entirety?” I agree wholeheartedly that we must never pick and choose whatever passages of Scripture happen to suit our style and reject the rest. You are indeed called by God to show us what you perceive as our mistake.

We are not convinced, however, that we are in error. I would like to show you first why we are so alarmed when we encounter contemporary worship. Then I want to show you how we interpret, in light of some New Testament passages, the passages you quoted on worship. And finally I want to defend our position and the writer to whom you have responded.

First of all it is essential to understand that God is not pleased with everything that man calls worship. This should make us very careful about how we worship God. You have criticized our position saying our worship is not full and complete, and that is one danger, but we must also recognize another danger of which God warns us—false worship; worship that is all show and worship that is different from what God commands. We read in Ezekiel 33:31-33 “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not. And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.”

Again we read in Isaiah 1:13-15 “Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine

eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.”

In the New Testament we hear the same thing: Jesus says to the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 15:7-9, “Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

The passages quoted above deal primarily with worship that does not come from the heart. The heart is something that only God can judge, but we can know what is in the heart when we observe whether or not one is obedient to God. If one loves the Lord, then he will obey the Word of God. If one worships God without paying close attention to what God teaches us about worship, then we show that we do not really love God.

In this connection we must see that God is also angry with worship that is different from what God commands. Here are some examples of people with seemingly good intentions, but with disregard for God’s Word. God commanded that that ark of the covenant be carried only by the Levites, and when Uzzah touched it with good intentions, God killed him. (2 Samuel 6:6-7) When Korah and his company came to worship God as they pleased, God killed them as well. (Numbers 16). When Israel split from Judah, Jeroboam wanted to provide a new place for the people to worship Jehovah. We read in 1 Kings 12:28-30 “Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.” God was angry with him and everyone who followed after Jeroboam and his ideas.

Certainly, we want to be careful to worship God rightly. This was also the desire of Reformers such as John Calvin and Martin Luther. These men and some others of their time searched the Scriptures to provide some guidelines for church worship and these guidelines have been precious to Reformed churches ever since. These men took into consideration the whole counsel of God and kept in mind that the Church grows from a child in the Old Testament to an adult in the New Testament.

The worship God demands of the New Testament church is described clearly in the New Testament and

the basic principles are in perfect harmony with the Old Testament. Christ declared in John 4:23-24 “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” By “spirit” we understand that worship must arise out of a heart made new in Christ. Worship that is done “in truth” is worship according to God’s written revelation in Scripture.

You have set forth a number of texts from Scripture that reveal the people of God clapping, singing, dancing, shouting, raising their hands, and bowing in worship to God. We do not deny that all these actions and more can be acts of worship to God, but our point is that God is pleased to include only some of these things in the corporate worship of His people in Church. David danced before the Lord when the ark came to Jerusalem, but God did not instruct the priests and people did not dance and clap when they performed the worship exercises of the Old Testament. We need to make a distinction between public and private worship.

In addition to the distinction between public and private worship, we must remember that Christ’s coming rendered the Levitical priesthood and all the ceremonies obsolete (Hebrews 5:6 and 7:12). The question we need to answer then is “what remains of the Old Testament instruction and how is it more fully developed in the New Testament?” All the references you made to worship came from the Old Testament with the exception of 1 Timothy 2:8. Let us take a look at some more New Testament passages that speak of the worship by the organized church.

When Christ sent out the apostles he told them “observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:20). When they went to establish churches, they “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). One foundational element of worship that carries through from the OT is the reading and exposition of the scriptures (Acts 15:21 cf. II Cor. 3:15). Jesus went about teaching and preaching the gospel (Matt. 9:35) and likewise the apostles (Acts 5:42, 15:35, 20:7 and many other passages). Reading God’s Word and listening to Him speak through sound preaching is at the heart of worship.

We must hear the gospel preached before we respond in our praise. It is true that the church has abundant reason to clap, shout for joy, sing, and pray if the only words

preached are these: “Jesus died for our sins,” but the NT pattern makes it clear that God wants His people to spend most of their time in church listening to Him speak. If the sermon is very short, shallow, or missing, then public worship is seriously distorted.

The other elements of worship that God ordains are closely tied to hearing the Word of God. God also wills for His people to gather in fellowship when they hear the Word and worship (Hebrews 10:24-25). This is necessary to hear a preacher that has been called. God also is pleased to see His people working together in love and fellowship as the body of Christ. See also Romans 12:4-5; Acts 14:21-23; Acts 2:4; and I Corinthians 12:12).

God has given the church two visible, tangible signs that compliment the Word preached to teach us the truths of the covenant: the Lord’s Supper and Baptism. Thus the sacraments belong to public worship. See Matthew 26:26-27; Acts 2:42; Matthew 28:19-20 and other texts.

From many other passages, we read that God has given to His people two ways to respond in public worship to His Word of salvation: singing psalms and praying. (Col. 3:16; Acts 4:24-31, etc.) Again in harmony with all the other instruction God’s gives for worship, these things also are subject to guidelines. Knowing our sinful natures, we must realize that even our best attempts to worship God are tainted with sin and we are prone to corrupt worship. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he admonished them for their free-style worship. Things were getting out of hand. The people were doing whatever they felt best and their worship was chaos. (I Cor. 14:26, 33, 40).

In response to some of the specific things you mentioned: we do not clap or dance in worship because these things are not part of the corporate worship God has revealed for His church. Even so we do not condemn one who is so filled with joy at the preaching or reading of the Word that she claps or dances for joy on the way home. We do sing Psalms in worship and pray. We love Psalm 150 and believe that all creation praises God, but we do not take all these things into public worship. Some of the specific things mentioned in Psalm 150 were specific acts of worship that God gave to the priests of the OT, but not to the NT (just like animal sacrifices have been replaced by the one and only sacrifice of Christ.)

You write “He loves it when His name is praised, whether it be through contemporary styles of worship or any other ways that humans worship their creator.” It must be added: “in harmony with God’s Word.” Saul

also thought that he could please God with worship by making a sacrifice, but Samuel said to Him “Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.” 1 Samuel 13:13

Many contemporary styles of worship are designed to be exciting and invigorating for the people. This is no secret. I can see why it would be difficult to condemn it because it is something we like. Many of the elements of contemporary worship are carefully crafted by professional worship directors who are skilled in psychology but, I fear, do not take seriously God’s warnings against false worship. I fear that most of the excitement felt at a contemporary worship service is generated not by a clear understanding of the gospel, but rather by the high-tech sound system and other man-made elements. How sad it is when people are deceived into thinking they are worshiping when really they are controlled by their own emotions. Such can easily become self-worship.

Certainly, we worship God with our emotions as well, but emotions must be governed by an obedient mind. God gave us His Word to read and the Holy Spirit to work in harmony with that Word. If what we want and feel is not in harmony with the Word of God, then we can not attribute it to the work of the Holy Spirit. Knowing God must come first. We only begin to know God on this earth, and we will grow in our knowledge forever in heaven. Our praise for God must always be the result of our knowing God. If we spend all our time expressing our emotions, our joy, our feelings, our gladness, then we will not grow in our knowledge either and our worship becomes vain repetitions.

Yours in Christ,

John Huizenga ❖

Faithful Witnesses of God (4) Confessing the Truth Distinctly

by Aaron J. Cleveland

There are two dangers that we, as faithful witnesses of God, can fall into regarding our confession before men. The first danger is that we rarely or never confess God before men. The second is that we “cast our pearls before swine” by unwisely speaking of the holy things of God before vile men when we ought to be holding our tongues. These are the two extremes, and God’s Word warns us that we are to avoid both of them.

When we remember the work of the Spirit and that it is He who presents the opportunity for our confession, gives us the words we must speak, and makes the witness bear the fruit which He has providentially intended, then we will have a better understanding concerning our confession: to whom we must speak, when to speak, and what we must speak.

It is important that we understand the seriousness of our confession. God’s Word tells us that we are to confess God before men. In Matt. 10:32, in Jesus’ instruction to His disciples, we read, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” And this confession of God before men must start at a young age and manifests itself in very young believing children. Dr. Abraham Kuyper writes in his book, *The Implications of Public Confession*:

Indeed, confession begins early. It comes to expression in the schoolboy who hears his Jesus insulted by one of his associates. He objects to that insult. He simply refuses to be told such things. His fellows tease him, of course, and mock him, but, even though he is buffeted and beaten, he perseveres in his confession. Such occasions are presented to children—in school, on the streets, at their games—and they should rise to them. Baptized children must be Jesus’ children, and must be indignant when any disparage the Saviour they love. Confession begins as early as that; and those early confessions sometimes cost more of sacrifice and of tears than does the public confes-

sion in the church (pg. 19) Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI (1934).

God’s Word in many places tells us that one of the fruits of our faith will be that we speak the word of God. This is the idea we have in Psalm 116:10a which reads, “I believed, therefore have I spoken.” It is not the case, as John Calvin points out in his commentary on this verse, that faith remains “inoperative in the heart.” Rather, this faith will “of necessity manifest itself” with an outward confession. We cannot help but speak that which we believe by faith in our hearts. And it is important to understand this believing and speaking in the proper order. First we believe and then we speak. The child of God speaks only of those things on which he has meditated and knows for a truth by faith in his heart.

We have the same idea found in Romans 10:8-10. In verse 10 we read, “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Our confession will proceed from our mouths when our hearts are filled with God’s Word. It can be no other way. We must not underestimate the importance of our confession. It is not something that is optional, and proceeds from some, but not all children of God. Those who claim to be children of God, but do not confess God before men, create doubts about the condition of their hearts. According to James 2:17 theirs is a dead faith because it has no works.

Having established that every true child of God does confess his faith before men, we must understand what God’s Word says as to the appropriate time of speaking

Knowing when to speak
requires wisdom.

our confession before men. Knowing when to speak requires wisdom. Nowhere in Scriptures will we find instruction to speak indiscriminately and haphazardly. Nor

will we find instruction that we are to be speaking to anyone and everyone. There is a time to speak and a time to remain silent. Likewise, there are those to whom we must speak and those to whom we may no longer speak. Two verses which ought to guide us in our speaking are Ecclesiastes 3:7 and Matthew 7:6.

Ecclesiastes 3:7 reads, “A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” Matthew 7:6 reads, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”

We must speak when we are asked for the reason of the hope that is in us (I Peter 3:15). We must speak when we are asked, as Daniel’s three friends were, why we don’t worship the many gods of men’s imaginations (Daniel 3:13-18). We must speak when someone brings into question the doctrines which we believe and confess or when someone speaks belittling words about the truths of the gospel in our presence (Acts 24:10-15; Acts 24:24,25; Acts 26:1-6).

There are also times when we are to withhold our speech and refrain from giving that which is holy to dogs. The “dogs” and “swine” of Matthew 7:6 we must understand to be those who have an open hatred for God and a contempt for His Word. These are not merely people who we think are hardened and incurable, but those who have plainly manifested themselves to be haters of God. These “dogs” and “swine” go to great lengths to despise God and make it their profession to mock and damage (if they could) the cause of God. It is before these types that we are to withhold our confession. To speak before them is to profane the holy things of God.

Further instruction on our confession is to be found in Matthew 10:17-20. In these verses Jesus’ disciples are receiving instruction concerning their future mission work and the many trials they would face. In verses 17 and 18 they are warned to “beware of men.” There would be those who would severely persecute the disciples and bring them before governors and kings for Christ’s sake and for a testimony against the Gentiles. Then, in verses 19 and 20 they are given a beautiful promise: “But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in the same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” This promise is to us also. God, will by His Spirit bring His Word to remembrance that we may confess Him before men. John Calvin in his commentary on this passage writes that it is the “power of the Holy Spirit, who forms and

guides the tongues of believers to a sincere confession of their faith.”

Knowing exactly what to say in every situation when we are required to give our confession is also a matter which requires great wisdom. Every situation presents different difficulties and often we must answer various lies. It is obvious to a Reformed Christian that our confession must be the truth of the Word of God. Beyond that, it must be the truth confessed distinctly as possible and as summarized in our creeds. When we make public confession of faith before the church we take an oath that we “acknowledge the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments and in the Articles of the Christian faith and taught here in this Christian Church to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation.” Further, we resolve “by the grace of God to adhere to this doctrine; to reject all heresies repugnant thereto and to lead a new, godly life.” These words have many implications regarding the answer we give of the hope that is in us.

First, it is not sufficient that we confess only a few basic and general truths found in God’s Word. Many Arminians would readily agree with all of what we confess. Rather, we must confess the truths of Scriptures that the Holy Spirit has lead the true Reformed Churches to develop and as they have been summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. These three creeds positively and distinctively develop the truths of the Bible we hold dear, and they sharply condemn deadly lies which have infected many we will encounter.

Second, it is not sufficient that we speak only of a few truths which we believe without condemning the lie which we are confronting. When we make public confession of our faith we vow to “reject all heresies repugnant” to true doctrine. To “reject” a heresy means not only a positive affirmation of the truth, but a sharp and vigorous condemning of the lie in whatever form it may take. This applies not only to what we confess, but also

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to the whole of our walk. There is nothing more disgusting in the sight of God than someone who speaks the “truth” with his lips, but lives the lie. Our walk must always mirror our confession.

Third, our confession must be the same confession of doctrine which the church has in common. By our common confession we show that we are of the same mind and judgment and exhibit the unity that is to be found in the church. We read in I Cor. 1:10, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Similarly we read in Philippians 3:16, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." We are not free to have our own pet confession in which we state things the way we think they should be, but our confession is the confession which God has led His true church to believe. By doing so we manifest the unity of the church as she is united in a common confession.

When we confess the truth distinctly and condemn the lie sharply before those whom God has brought unto our path, we will no doubt cause divisions. In fact, we must beware when all men speak well of us, for this suggests that little of our confession has reached them or that it is weak. This is the testimony of God's Word. But, we are not to be discouraged when we are reproached for our faithful confession, for the faithful witnesses of God have a great reward. Before God our names will be confessed by Christ in heaven (Matt. 10:32, Luke 12:8).

*Thy promised mercies send to me,
Thy great salvation Lord;
So shall I answer those who scoff;
My trust is in Thy word.*

*My hope is in Thy judgment, Lord;
Take not Thy truth from me,
And in Thy law for evermore
My daily walk shall be.*

*And I will walk at liberty
Because Thy truth I seek;
Thy truth before the kings of earth
With boldness I will speak.*

*The Lord's commands, which I have loved,
Shall still new joy impart;
With rev'ence I will hear Thy laws
And keep them in my heart.*

Psalter 326, verses 1-4 ❖

*Aaron is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church
in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

Prodigal Son

*A headstrong son had left his father's home—
The world he'd see.
The confines of his home were limiting—
"Too dull for me!"
"While I am young and healthy I will roam
And make my way."
Soon he was living high, with friends galore
Both night and day.
But after he had wasted all his funds
He must take stock;
His "friends" no longer meet him at the door,
They only mock.
So he would work; but jobs are hard to find.
What can he do?
The only task he found was feeding swine;
He's hungry too.
He finally decides to seek his father's face
Repentantly.
Prepared to be a servant at his father's place,
Contrite was he.
Yet, long before he reached there, father ran
His son to meet.
Forgiveness granted, and he welcomed him
To the best seat.
Was that son worthy to be greeted thus?
No, not at all!
But so our heav'nly Father deals with us
When we too fall.*

by Thelma Westra



The Song of Zion

A Psalter-Psalm Devotional of Praise to Our Sovereign Covenant God
by Skip Hunter

August 1 Read Psalm 104:19-29

Psalm 104:19 On the fourth day of creation, God placed the sun and the moon in the heavens. As this verse indicates this was not only for light, but also to mark the passing of time. The world is concerned with the passing of this millennium and the entrance into the next. These so called milestones should not bring to the church great concern. But the passing of time should cause us to look ahead to the second coming of our Lord and Savior. Young people, do you look at the moon and sun as signs to you? Are you preparing yourself for the day of His coming? Today is Sunday. It is the Lord's Day. Its coming was marked by the moon and the sun. Let us use it for the purpose that God intended. Let us "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy." Sing Psalter 286:3.

August 2 Read Genesis 3:14-19

Psalm 104:20-23 Yesterday we saw that God gave the sun and the moon to mark the day, night, and other divisions of time. Today we see that He has given those divisions for animals and man to carry out their appointed duties. We want to focus on man's duties. Man is to labor until the evening. That is man's duty. We must work. This is true for all ages. Children must work. This may be school work, work assigned by parents, or it may be play. That is the work of a child. They must carry it out completely to God's honor and glory. Young people must work. School work, work at home, work for an employer, and recreation with young people of like faith belong to the domain of the young person. Adults must work. Their work is the work of those who "have put away childish things." Our day is a day of play. As believers we must see that God has ordained us to work. Our recreation or vacation may never become the focal point of our lives. If we must labor six days a week, fifty-two weeks a year; so be it. Work is ordained by God. Let us begin our work week with this in mind. Psalter 286:4.

August 3 Read Genesis 1:20-25

Psalm 104:24-26 It is that first part of verse twenty-four to which I wish to call your attention. Are we quick to acknowledge the many works of God? Do we fall into the trap of remarking that "It's raining outside?" God rains. God causes the flowers to bloom. When we break from our work, we can find much restful time in enjoying the works of God. We do not need the hype of the world's play. God has provided for us a rest from our labors each day. Sunday is the day of rest. But there is rest around us daily. The second part shows to us why God's works are good. God made them out of His holy wisdom. The colors, shapes, and smells in nature are not the products of evolution or mere accidents. They are the works of a

wise God given to His people. Look at creation, people of God. Look at creation, young people. Identify God's handiwork and thank Him for it. Sing Psalters 286:5 and 288:1.

August 4 Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-14

Psalm 104:27-29 Read again verse 14 of Ecclesiastes 3. There we find the purpose of creation and whatever happens in it. We wonder why the beautiful deer lies dead upon the roadside. We wish the gorgeous flowers could last forever. Even the melting of snow sculpted by the finger of God causes sadness to some. "Why?" we might ask. It is so that we might fear Jehovah. Death is a reminder that sin entered God's good creation. When we see death in creation, it should remind us of our sin and point us to Christ. Yes, we may weep over death. But we must be comforted. God has sent to us His comforter who will teach us all things. God's way is good. Let us see that way and give thanks for it even as we weep. Sing Psalter 286:6.

August 5 Read Psalm 104:30-35

Psalm 104:30-31 We are coming to the end of summer. Even as we see fields of grain ripening, we know that in a short time it will be cut down and dead stalks will be left. Is that the end of it? By God's hand, no. We have the promise of spring. Next year that field will be green and lush again. God has given this to us for our education. Unless Christ returns in our lifetime, we, too, must die. But we have the promise of heaven where we will spring into life to glorify our Savior. Death is the passageway unto that better thing that awaits us. We need not fear death any more than we fear that the dry parched field is useless. The harvested seed contains the life for next year. The body placed in the grave will sprout again in its new field in heaven. It will be a changed body. It will be a glorified body. It will be a body rejoiced in by the Lord. Do we need any other comfort in death? Sing Psalter 287:1.

August 6 Read Habakkuk 3:1-10

Psalm 104:32-33 God can do marvelous things by looking at them or by barely touching them. Now we recognize the figure here as an anthropomorphism-giving to God qualities of man. But these are necessary to show to us some of God's characteristics. He makes great things happen by the power of His will. What is our response to these great things? How do we react when we see the effects of the volcano and earthquake? The Holy Spirit through the psalmist calls us to sing. We must praise our God for these great things. We must remember that these great things are pictures of the salvation He has wrought in us. We were dead sticks before He touched us. We must sing. We must sing as children. We must sing as young

people. We must sing as adults. We must sing as we draw our last breaths. What do we sing? Praise to God. Songs of Zion. These must be the words that we take on our lips. Sing Psalters 287:2 and 288:2-3.

August 7 Read Habakkuk 3:11-19

Psalm 104:34-35 The psalmist closes this Psalm with thoughts about meditation. Do you meditate on God, people of God? Young people, do you daily stop and contemplate the goodness of Jehovah? Are you glad for what God has done for you? Do you look for the time when the wicked will be no more? Are these wicked your friends? If they are, you do not have sweet thoughts about God. We must stay away from the world's wickedness and the wicked of the world. When we do this, we can be glad in the Lord. Let us speak well of God daily in all that we do. Let us praise His name with our whole being. He has done great things for us individually. Are we happy? Do we show it in our daily lives? Sing Psalters 287:3 and 288:4.

August 8 Read Psalm 105:1-8

Psalm 105:1-2 This Psalm is another Psalm of praise. While in the last one we were called to praise God for His mighty work of creation, in this one we are called to praise God for His work in history. True, the history is very specific to Israel, but God carries out all history for the good of His church. We are called to praise God for the goodness that He has shown to His church throughout the lives of its people. Whether it be the people of the old or new dispensation, God is to be praised for His gracious work. We are to do this in word as we talk to one another or as we pray privately or publicly. We are also to do this in song. This means that we pray and sing for and about the destruction of the wicked. This means we study history so that we can speak about it. This is the calling of young and old alike. Let us study history and speak about the goodness of God. Sing Psalter 289:1.

August 9 Read Psalm 27

Psalm 105:3-4 God's name is holy. We confessed this and sang about this yesterday as we went to God's house. How are we living today? Does our speech betray our God and Savior? Do we blaspheme His name at work, at play, or on the ball field? Do we allow others to blaspheme God's name unchecked by us? Do we live in the consciousness of the holy name of God? What about the music to which we listen? Does it confess the holiness of God's name? The third commandment explicitly speaks to us on this matter. We must keep this commandment every moment of our lives. Young people, are you people of the living God whose name is holy? Do you show it in your speech? Parents, do you insist upon your children and young people honoring God's holy name? Do you remove all from their lives which prevents this? Seek the Lord by blessing His holy name. Sing Psalter 289:2.

August 10 Read Deuteronomy 8:1-10

Psalm 105:5-6 The psalmist continues in his commands to us to remember God for his works. He now introduces the covenant aspect in verse six. We are a covenant people. God has seen fit to enter into that covenant with us. This is a living covenant established with God's people and shown throughout time. In this verse we see the covenant as shown in Abraham and Jacob. That covenant heritage should be precious to us. Through it God has taken us and delivered us from sin and brought us into the marvelous light. We are completely undeserving of such grace. We have done nothing. We have received everything. In thanksgiving for such

goodness, let us praise God and bless His name as the sovereign God of the covenant. Sing Psalter 289:3.

August 11 Read Luke 1:67-79

Psalm 105:7-8 Zacharias knew of God's covenant. He had been brought up in it. He lived in it being a priest in Aaron's line. When his mouth was opened after the birth of his son, he utter a beautiful song in which he praised God for his covenant faithfulness. It had been four hundred years since God had last spoken to Israel. But Zacharias believed the covenant promises. His song reveals this to us. Do we have the same assurance that Zacharias had? Are we content with God's covenant? Could we sing as he did? We can only do this if we immerse ourselves in God's Word. We must acknowledge His mighty deeds as His and His alone. Let us make this our hope and desire all the days of our lives. Sing Psalter 289:4.

August 12 Read Psalm 105:9-16

Psalm 105:9-12 Throughout Scripture we read of the smallness of the church. This should not be discouraging to us. For out of a family of twelve men, God developed the whole nation of Israel. Out of one hundred twenty people the church of the new dispensation was established. During the time of the Reformation small pockets of people established Reformed churches in many lands. Even today God will use a little band of people to establish a church. Out of these small beginnings the church triumphant will one day all stand together in heaven. The church prophesied to be as many as the sand on the seashore will be a reality. We must not despise small things, but rather we must look forward when the whole multitude of elect will give adoration to God for the great things He has done. Sing Psalter 289:5.

August 13 Read Acts 28:16-31

Psalm 105:13-15 God's people are pilgrims and strangers upon this earth. We have no abiding place here. Therefore our home is always among strangers. We always must find a place where we can have a dwelling place. Sometimes we are oppressed and afflicted. We should not fear. God takes care of his people. He lead Israel through the desert. He caused Joseph to precede them into Egypt. Some of our forefathers had to go to a new country. God was with them. God caused them to dwell in safety for He is the God of His church. The day is coming when we must rely on His promise to us. We will not be able to buy or sell. Fear not, people of God. He will cause no harm to come to our souls, we will be led to our eternal home in heaven. Sing Psalter 289:6-7.

August 14 Read Genesis 41:37-45

Psalm 105:16 Yesterday we saw how God protected His people wherever He placed them. Today we see how through providence He worked out the council of His will. God caused a famine to be throughout the world. By means of this famine He caused Israel to sojourn in Egypt and made them into the nation out of which He brought forth His son. Notice that one of the basic necessities of life was the instrument used by God. We take our food for granted. Most of us have such abundance and such variety that a famine would be unthinkable. We would probably have to go back one or two generations to remember a time that food was not so plentiful. But even in times of hardship God cares for His people. He will care for us as well in His love and tender mercy. Sing Psalter 289:8.

August 15 Read Psalm 105:17-27

Psalm 105:17-19 Young people, you should study the life of Joseph. You should be instructed by his life and you should be comforted by his life. No, being spoiled by his father is not a thing

for which to wish. To be made ruler of a heathen land should not be your goal. But look at other parts of his life. He was oppressed by his brothers. This was not the usual sibling rivalry, but this was oppression because of the faith. He was tried in Potiphar's house, and was, by God's grace, able to resist the sexual advances of Potiphar's wife. He languished in prison. Why? Because God was trying His faith. He did not forget his faith even in the palace. He gave to his sons names which indicate that God was in His thoughts. Joseph's life is full of instruction for the people of God. Let us study his life and receive instruction. Sing Psalter 289:9.

August 16 Read Genesis 41:46-57

Psalm 105:20-22 In Proverbs 21:1 we read, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." This truth is evident in the passage that we read for today as well as our text for today. Do we consider this truth even as we deal with government? Are we aware that God holds the heart of the president in his hand and causes him to act as he does? Do we consider this as we see worldwide conflicts break out? God has ordained government. One of the reason for government is so that God's counsel concerning His people is carried out. We are called to pray for government. There are at least two reasons why this is so. First we pray for the salvation of the elect who have been placed in authority. Secondly we pray that the government will so rule that the church may have a quiet and peaceful life. Government is a creature of God. He is sovereign and rules even presidents. Sing Psalter 289:10.

August 17 Read Acts 7:9-19

Psalm 105:23-25 God "increased his people greatly" we read in today's verses. One of the signs of God's covenant is the increase in covenant children. This should be the desire of every member of the covenant. Children should desire to be fathers and mothers some day. Their play should reflect this desire. Young people should date in order that they can marry and bring forth covenant seed. Dating is an important part of a young person's life. It should not be taken lightly. Parents should desire to have their quivers full of children. The number is not their decision and choice. God must decide what a full quiver is. Grandparents can also help all age groups in this work. The world tries to stop children, young people, and parents from expressing the covenant in this way. We must fight all the temptations in this matter. Let us pray that God will use us to bring forth His covenant seed. Sing Psalter 289:11.

August 18 Read Acts 7:20-36

Psalm 105:26-27 God chooses officebearers. Sometimes the phrase "Mr. So and So is running for elder" pops up in our congregation. We must remember that officebearers are not the choice of a democratic society. Officebearers are called and qualified by God. Moses and Aaron are good examples of this fact. Moses did not want to lead God's people. He had many excuses why he could not do this. We have two callings in respect to the fact that God chooses officebearers. First of all, all of us no matter what age we are must give to elders, deacons, and ministers the respect due their office. We must seek out their wise counsel for our lives. Secondly we must desire to be officebearers. Young men, you can prepare yourself for this wise calling. Study the Scriptures, pay attention to what is happening in the churches, and above all pray that God will qualify you for this task. Adult men, do not refuse to serve. Seek to serve. Do not make excuses. Pray that God will fit you for the task to which you may be called. Sing Psalter 289:12.

August 19 Read Psalm 105:39-45

Psalm 105:28-35 The verses for today are an accounting of the plagues upon Egypt. How well are you acquainted with this history? Can you name the ten plagues? Can you name them in order? The history of the Old Testament is ripe with instruction if we would only learn and study it. Each of the plagues has instruction for us. We should not just say there were ten plagues. We should know them individually, and we should study them individually. By doing this we will not only learn of the redemption of Israel from Egypt, but we will also learn about our redemption from sin. Study the Scriptures. Know the Scriptures. Search the Scriptures. By doing these things we will be blessed by God in our daily lives. Sing Psalter 289:13.

August 20 Read Exodus 12:29-36

Psalm 105:36-37 There are those who dismiss the Old Testament as an unimportant part of the Bible. This is not so. In today's text we read of our redemption through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, Christ's name is not mentioned in these two verses, but by means of types and shadows we can learn of our salvation. Egypt's firstborn was destroyed. Believing Israel's firstborn was preserved by the blood of a Lamb. We are saved through the blood of the Lamb. Can the story of salvation be told any simpler? God delivered His people from Egypt. He delivers us from Hell. What more can be said? Glory to God in the highest. Thanks be to Him for the gift of the Savior. Sing Psalter 289:14.

August 21 Read Deuteronomy 19:1-9

Psalm 105:38 Is the world glad when you leave them? Do you leave them? In today's church world there is a constant call for unification. We, too, are guilty of that when we attend Bible studies in which we must compromise our distinctive Reformed principles. We fall into this error when we allow and even encourage our children and young people to be led in a study of the Bible that is not thoroughly Reformed. It is serious business when we think a little Arminianism will not hurt our children and young people. The nominal church world should be glad when we leave them. They should be glad because they cannot stomach a Reformed Bible-centered discussion. Let us not amalgamate with those who have watered down the Word. Let us make them glad when we leave them. Sing Psalter 289:15.

August 22 Read Psalm 105:39-45

Psalm 105:39 God cares for His people. This truth has been evident throughout all ages. In the old dispensation He expressed His care in types and shadows. The Shechinah cloud was a covering and a light. Just as a gardener will cover his garden to protect it from marauding birds or killing frosts, God covers His people with His grace. That cloud also proved to be a light when Israel had to move at night such as at the Red Sea. God's cover of grace is with us today as well. Who among us has not felt His care when troubles have struck us? We have been covered by His love in many difficulties. That grace has also been a light to lighten our way through the darkness of sin. Let us cling to that cloud which is God's presence with us. Sing Psalter 289:16.

August 23 Read I Corinthians 10:1-12

Psalm 105:40-41 God continued to care for His people as He led them through the wilderness. They needed food. He provided for them abundantly. He gave them bread from heaven. We need food. He provides for us in great abundance. I am sure that a majority of us have never gone hungry. Israel murmured against God in His

provisions. We, too, have murmured in what God has given us. Children, have you turned up your noses at the food your mother set on the table? Young people, are you less than satisfied when you do not receive pizza for supper? Our physical food is a sign of the spiritual food that God provides for us. Israel was not always happy about the worship God mandated for them. What about us? Are we always satisfied with the way we are to worship Jehovah? Let us see God's grace in His care for us. Let us be satisfied with it and be truly thankful day by day. Sing Psalter 289:17.

August 24 Read Exodus 15:1-21

Psalm 105:42-43 After Israel crossed the Red Sea. Moses broke into a joyful song of praise to God. We also read that the women praised God for His mighty deeds. How about us? Are we praising God for His wonderful act of salvation for us. Is the whole congregation praising God? Men? Women? Young people? Children? Let us praise God for all his mighty works! Sing Psalter 289:18.

August 25 Read Revelation 19:1-9

Psalm 105:44-45 After forty long years Israel was finally given the land of Caanan. Many things happened during those forty years. You know the stories. What was the purpose of their inheritance? It was so that they could serve God as He has commanded. We, too, have been given much in this life. What is the purpose? That we may serve God by keeping all of His commandments. Our service of God cannot be one of convenience. It cannot be one which honors us or any other man. It must be one that is completely God-glorifying. All of what we receive on this earth points ahead until we go to the spiritual Caanan-heaven. There we will serve God perfectly. Are you waiting for that day? Are you longing for that day? Sing Psalter 289:19.

August 26 Read Psalm 106:1-12

Psalm 106:1 Psalm 106 is the last Psalm in this "section or book" of the Psalms. It is a recounting of God's faithfulness to His people even when it was evident that this faithfulness was not deserved. As we go through it we will need to see the application of its lessons for us. The first verse is a verse of praise. It is the introduction of the whole Psalm. We are called to praise and thank the Lord. Once more we see a Hebrew parallelism. The second part of the verse gives a reason for the first. Why are we to praise God? We are to praise God because He is good. This implies our sinfulness. His mercy last forever. This implies our total dependence on God. We do not deserve mercy, but God in His grace gives to us mercy. Praise the Lord for His mercy endures forever. Sing Psalter 290:1.

August 27 Read Ephesians 1:1-12

Psalm 106:2 Verse two is in the form of two rhetorical questions. These are questions for which there is an obvious answer. Who can fulfill the command of verse one? Only those who have been called out of darkness into God's marvelous light. Of ourselves we do not deserve God's mercy. Of ourselves we would not break forth into singing. We do not want to praise God. We would rather praise Satan and his people. We do not want to sing the songs of Zion. We would rather fill our homes and cars with Satan's music. Only by God's grace has He elected us to eternal life. Let us praise God and thank Him for He has done good unto us who do not deserve it. Sing Psalter 290:2.

August 28 Read Matthew 5:1-12

Psalm 106:3 What are the characteristics of those who have been redeemed by grace? What are they like who have been given the great gift of salvation? We find these characteristics summed up for

us in verse three of this Psalm. They are those who keep the law of God. This is stated very succinctly in the Ten Commandments. We must walk in that law day and night. Secondly we must do righteousness at all times. What does this mean? Simply it means that we must love God first of all. We must love Him who has redeemed us. We must do this each hour of each day that we live. Secondly we must love our neighbor as ourselves. This, too, is something that must be done constantly. As children and young people we must remember this. School has started or will start soon. How will we treat all our classmates? Walk in righteousness day by day. Sing Psalter 290:3.

August 29 Read Luke 2:25-35

Psalm 106:4 Today is a good day to ponder the words of verse four. Today is the Lord's Day. Do we like Simeon frequent the house of God in order to seek the salvation of the Lord? Do we want to go there? Or must we be dragged by parents or by custom or habit? Grandparents and parents, do you set a good example about frequenting the House of God? Have we absented ourselves from church for the sake of a vacation or something else that was more appealing to us. God's favor only rests upon those who walk in His ways and commandments. One of His commands to us is that we faithfully attend church. We must also do more than enter the building. We must participate in each and every aspect of the service. Only then will we be remembered with God's grace and salvation. Sing Psalter 290:4.

August 30 Read I Corinthians 12:12-14; 23-27

Psalm 106:5 Verse five gives the reason for verse four. Go back and read that verse again. Then notice in verse five the three synonyms for members of God's church. They are chosen, nation, and inheritance. Each of these is preceded by a possessive pronoun which refers to God. We only receive God's favor because we belong to Him. We are not individuals in this; we belong to the body of Christ. Going to church means that we wish to join in the communion of saints. This means that we acknowledge the members of the congregation as elect of God. We share their joys and sorrows. We are there to help them when it is needed. We do not make excuses to ignore them, but rather we love them even as God has loved us. Sing Psalter 290:5.

August 31 Read Romans 3:10-18

Psalm 106:6 We now come to the body of this Psalm. After showing that this Psalm is a Psalm of praise for what God has done for us, we now see how great this deed really was and is. We are a people prone to all kinds of sin. We sin every day. We sin at home, at school, at work, and at play. We must not read the rest of this Psalm and point the finger at Israel. We, too, deserve nothing of God's mercy. We, too, have sinned with our fathers, have committed iniquity, have done wickedly. The first part of our Heidelberg Catechism indicates our sin and misery. But it does this with the conscious knowledge of the salvation that we have received. Let us repent of our sins, seek the salvation which only comes from God, and praise Him with our whole being. Sing Psalter 290:6.

Psalter 399—The Excellency of God

by Beth DeVries

We are called upon to extol and ever bless our God in this versification of Psalm 145. The greatness of our God emphasizes our need to praise Him. We see that this glory and honor are due to God by all creatures throughout the ages. The eternal kingdom of God is the glorious fulfillment of God's plan. It is in expectation of that kingdom that we also praise and glorify our God in this life.

Each day we praise and glorify our God for the wonders which He has wrought for us undeserving sinners. We see His power proclaimed in the mighty thunder storms that fill our summer skies with lightning. We witness His glory each morning when the sun rises anew with a beauty unseen before. How can we do anything but utter praise to God for these wonders around us! God is almighty in His creating and controlling of His creation. We read of this in Nehemiah 9:6 "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee."

The end of the first stanza of Psalter 399 speaks about the ways of God being beyond our understanding both in creation and in His other great works. We can not see and know all the ways of God. Despite the fact that many

of God's ways are beyond our knowing we accept these things by faith.

The glory of God does not dull over time. God is as worthy of our praise now as He was when He first created the heavens and earth. The many accounts of God's

grace and power of which we read in the Scriptures and know from stories of the past reinforce to us the greatness of our God. We think of God's preserving His people when they passed through the Red Sea, preserving the church through the dark ages, protecting those used to reform the church, and His constant keeping of His church through the ages. God in His abounding love does not leave His people but always keeps them and protects them. This inspires us to praise His holy name all the more.

We think of how kind God has been to us when we turn from Him and seek our own ways. He constantly brings us back to Him. He is very patient and compassionate toward His people. Even when His people provoke Him to anger as the people of Israel did while sojourning in the wilderness. We read in Deuteronomy 30:3 of

God's compassion : "That then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee." This was true of Israel and is also true today as God preserves His people from all lands. Psalm 78 also speaks of God's compas-

399 The Excellency of God
PSALM 145: 7, 8, 9 Sr. Loren Lewis H. Redner

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sion on the people of Israel during their time of much murmuring. This is seen especially in verse 38 where we read “but he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.” We learn from these lessons in Scripture that God will also deal most kindly with us. We thank and praise Him for that compassion for we are undeserving of it.

This Psalm and Psalter versification goes on to speak of the kingdom of God. God always has His kingdom in the world by means of the church but will fully manifest it in the final eternal kingdom. We are filled with great thankfulness and praise that we are a part of that kingdom. We also are assured that God’s kingdom will al-

ways be triumphant. God’s kingdom is partially realized on this earth and will be fully realized at the end of time in the new heavens and earth. The church in the world is always small and will not have earthly dominion, but it will have eternal dominion. We live not for this world but for God and the world to come, for we are but pilgrims and strangers in this world. May we remember this and keep our focus on the eternal glory that awaits us when we join God in heaven. May we sing with this in mind and give praise to our God now knowing and believing His faithfulness to us. What a great God we have! To Him be all the glory now and forevermore. ❖

Beth is a member of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.

Where We Stand

The Gift of Discipleship (2)

by Prof. Herman Hanko and Rev. Ron Hanko

The following article was originally written for the “Newsletter” which is being published by the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* Matthew 16:24.

We will quote again the question that prompted this and the preceding article: “Our discipleship: is it ‘conditional’ or ‘unconditional’? ‘offered’ or ‘demanded’? a matter of ‘decision’ or ‘election’?”

We pointed out last time that discipleship is given by grace alone, through the work of the Holy Spirit and based upon the meritorious value of Christ’s cross. It is

rooted in election and belongs only to those who are elect.

We noticed that the very demands of discipleship are such that we would never, agree to become a disciple. It is contrary to everything we want in life.

The context also makes clear that discipleship is a gift of grace, because Jesus spoke these words to His disciples, who were already disciples, but who had an erroneous conception of what it meant to follow Jesus.

I wish to make a couple more important points about this, however.

I have been at great pains to stress, in this article and in the one before this, that no one, knowing the cost

of discipleship, would ever agree of his own free will to become a disciple.

This does not mean, however, that those who are made disciples become reluctant and unwilling disciples who only remain disciples because their resistance is overcome by sovereign grace, and their ability to break away from Christ is resisted by a power greater than anything they have.

When God's people are made Christ's disciples by the Holy Spirit, they are made willing, obedient, eager, and joyful disciples. Yes, even though the "cost" of discipleship is self-denial and cross-bearing, the Holy Spirit alters their will so that these disciples consider it a great privilege to follow Christ—even in His way of suffer-

even though the "cost" of discipleship is self-denial and cross-bearing, the Holy Spirit alters their will so that these disciples consider it a great privilege to follow Christ

ing. This is why I gave to these articles the title, "*The Gift of Discipleship*."

When the Canons of Dordt describe the work of conversion (which includes the work of being made a disciple), it says: "God...infuses new qualities into the will, which though heretofore dead, he quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, he renders it good, obedient, and pliable..." (3 & 4, 11). (You should read the entire article.)

That disciples joyfully bear their cross is evident from the joy with which the apostles praised God when they were whipped by the Sanhedrin for preaching Christ (Acts 5:41).

Someone may ask, however: "If Jesus is simply instructing His disciples and us in the true qualifications of discipleship, why does He put it the way He does? Why does He say, 'If any man will come after me . . . ?' It sounds like every one has a chance, and the final decision rests with man."

But that kind of interpretation is so wrong that it is not even really worth talking about.

There is certainly an implied demand here—as the questioner suggests. Disciples must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Christ. Jesus requires that. In fact, this is so much a part of discipleship that without self-denial and cross-bearing, we can never be a disciple. But the reasons Jesus puts it this way are two.

In the first place, it is our Lord's purpose to save us so that we become willing disciples. But He does not work that willingness in our hearts blindly and as one manipulates a robot. He comes with the demands of dis-

He does not work that willingness in our hearts blindly and as one manipulates a robot.

cipleship and works by His Spirit so that we joyfully follow Him regardless of the cost.

And in the second place, because all our nature is contrary to what discipleship requires, we fulfill these demands only in the way of struggle against sin, putting down our own inclinations which are opposed to self-denial and cross-bearing, and earnestly beseeching God's grace in prayer and supplication that we may be true disciples.

We are made willing in the day of His power, as Psalm 110 puts it (vs. 3). And so, in willingness and joyful obedience, we choose what no man can possibly choose apart from grace. As Moses did when he "by faith . . . chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Heb. 11:25, 26).

A foolish choice from a human point of view, but a choice that leads to glory—as it did for Christ—and we follow Him.

It is all God's work in us and through us and to His glory. ❖

Prof. Herman Hanko is professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary and Rev. Ron Hanko is missionary-pastor of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland.

Early Church History— The Apostolic Fathers

by Rev. John A. Heys

Reprinted from the October, 1945 issue of Beacon Lights.

When the work God has prescribed for a certain saint is finished, God calls him home to glory. Thus the time soon comes when each one of the twelve Apostles is called home to glory. God has just so much work for each one to do, some more and some less, but each one a definite prescribed amount. We can expect then to find a moment in the early history of the New Testament Church when the last of the Apostles is called home and the Church is without their instruction and leadership.

There were, however, men whom God had brought in contact with the Apostles, either through personal contact or through their writings, and whom He had chosen to continue the work of the Apostles. As God has given disciples to Christ that they might spread abroad the truths they learned from Him, so He gave to the Apostles disciples that they might teach the church the truths they learned and might exhort the church to walk in that way. These men are generally called The Apostolic Fathers, having lived in part in the same period of Church History as the Apostles did. There were six such men whose names we know. They are Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Barnabas, Hermas and Papias.

We must not expect these men to be the equal of any one of the Apostles. The Apostles were special ambassadors of Christ, the New Testament prophets who received special revelations from the Spirit and were guided infallibly by Him in their writings. This cannot be said of any one of the Apostolic Fathers. They were sincere men and revealed an amazing insight into the truth that the Spirit revealed through the Apostles, but their writings reveal the fact that they are man's work and not God's.

From their writings we obtain an insight into the condition of the Church in the period shortly after the death of the Apostles. Taken all together, these writings show us that it was a period of doctrinal dullness; that

is, a period wherein there was no positive development of the truth. In their writings these Apostolic Fathers merely repeated what the Apostles taught and made little attempt to explain the meaning and implications of these truths. Their writings can be characterized as a series of confessions of faith and exhortations to holy living. There are also manifestations of the fact that they did not always understand the teachings of the Apostles correctly. We shall speak of this presently.

The second thing in regard to the conditions in the church that is to be noted from their writings is the fact that it is a period when the struggle between the true and the false church is fairly strong. Heresies were beginning to lift up their proud head with greater boldness. In Paul's day they were by no means silent, but infallibly guided by the Spirit, He was able to lay them low with the truth. We are thinking for example of the heresy which Paul condemns in I Corinthians 15, namely, that there is no resurrection from the dead. Paul proves this contention to be contrary to God's word and therefore a lie. Now that the Apostles were all gone home to glory the various heresies begin to reassert themselves and make a stronger bid for recognition. This undoubtedly accounts for the fact that the writings of these Apostolic Fathers is so full of admonitions to walk holily and of confessions as to what is the truth.

Clement wrote an epistle to the Corinthians which makes the above facts very plain. You will recall that in I Corinthians 1 Paul condemns the division in that church. Some said that they were of Paul, some of Cephas and some of Christ. Paul rebuked them for this schism and sectarian spirit in the church. Very plain it is from the letter Clement wrote to the Corinthians that this division re-asserted itself after Paul's death. For Clement in it again rebukes them for this sectarian spirit. Barnabus warned the church against falling back into Judaism. His epistle is comparable as to its purpose—not its content—to the Epistle to the Hebrews, wherein the author also

warns the recently converted Jews against returning to their Judaism.

Comparing the works of Clement and Ignatius a teaching is found which reveals an existing difference of opinion on a principle so important that centuries later it brought forth a great split in the church. It had to do with the merger of offices in the church. Clement knew no ruler in the Church above the elder. According to him the elders ruled, and no one in the congregation or in any other congregation was above them. Ignatius maintained that the bishop was above the elder. For this he is considered to be the father of hierarchy. We have here the beginning of the form of church government exercised and maintained by the Roman Catholic Church. Ignatius would never subscribe to all the elaborate system wherein the Pope has the last word in all things and

is considered to be infallible in his decisions. Yet his ideas of church government lead to that system. We have always followed the view of Clement, for that is the teaching of Scripture.

One other interesting point about this period is that during this time we read definitely for the first time that the Church worshipped on the first day of the week rather than on the Jewish Sabbath of the last day of the week. The form of worship was twofold. In the morning worship there was the reading of Scripture, preaching of the Word, singing and prayer. The evening service consisted in a common evening meal followed by the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This was done already in Paul's day as you may conclude from I Corinthians 11:17-22, although here it was corrupted. ❖

The late Rev. Heys was a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches from 1941 to 1980.

The State Reformed Church Of Reduzum

by J.P. de Klerk

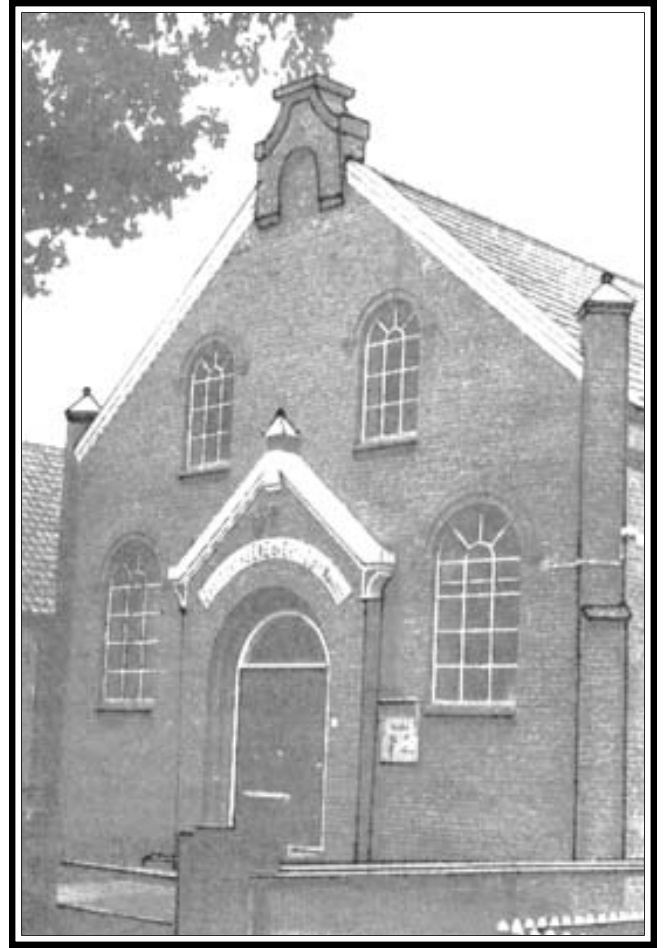
This church in the Dutch province of Friesland has a beautiful tower, in British style. As usual it is surrounded by many graves, but not all of them have a tombstone. The walls of the church are very thick, which means that it was built centuries ago; well preserved and maintained. In old manuscripts it is said that Friesland came into existence in 300 before Christ and the first man would have been Friso, from India perhaps an explorer or merchant with a small private army. Most Frisians however came from an area which is now known as Germany, and they arrived before the Zuyder Zee (now called IJsselmeer) came into existence which split their territory up in two parts. Friesland was occupied by the Roman armies and had to be taxed by them. They rebelled against them in the year 28 after Christ, but lost the battles in 47. Some left and went to England.



In Hollum, At Ameland

Perhaps you never heard of the island of Ameland before. It is one of the Dutch “Waddeneilanden” (the Frisian Islands), 23 kilometers long and about 4 kilometers wide (5625 hectares), mostly sand but with a strip of clay close to the coastline. There are four villages, namely Hollum, Ballum, Nes and Buren. The inhabitants speak a dialect, made of a mixture of Dutch and the old Frisian language. Most of them are farmers. They have built a dam to protect their land against the sea, which in the past has taken away a lot of soil. Ameland was discovered in 600 A.D. and taken by the Frisian king Radboud, who named it Fosteland (after a heathen god, Foste). In 1704 Prince Johan-Willem Friso of Orange-Nassau has lived here for some time. At the picture you see the Synodal Reformed Church of Hollum. It has no tower or bells, but some ornamental brickwork. Above the entrance you see the words “Geeft den Heere de Eere Zijns Naams” (from the “Staten-Bijbel”; like the KJV) which means “Give to the Lord the Honour of His Name.” ❖

J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from Ashurst, New Zealand.



Minding Missions

Life on a Mission Field— Learning to Live Antithetically

By Kelli Bauman

Living on a mission field is work that is not cut out for just anyone. It takes people with special gifts to be able to work with the eld-

erly, mentally retarded, or to work in the emergency room of a hospital, and it takes people with special gifts to live on a mission field. This kind of living takes a lot of

sacrifice, dedication, and hard work. It is not to be thought of lightly or in any fashion “fun” or “something new and different.” To any person who may be considering moving to a mission field, a lot of prayer, thought, and serious consideration must be put into the decision. There can be very heavy consequences if a person’s mind is not focused correctly when making a decision of this importance. But at the same time, there can also be rewards of precious jewels in a Christian’s life i.e. faith, patience, and above all, trust in God.

When you are on a mission field, you must learn what it means to live an antithetical life. This is terribly crucial. The mission field is in the midst of the world, the world’s philosophies, the world’s opinions, and the world’s way of life. You are completely out-numbered. This is something that can be easily forgotten in the church community. You become so surrounded in church life and activities, that you have no real contact with the secular living.

Living in the midst of the world teaches you to soul search and shows you how you are doing in your walk as a Christian. If you are not living antithetically, the world will not see anything different about you. It sees you as “one of them” and that means you are not walking the straight and narrow. It is very easy for this to happen. You just want to stay out of evil circumstances and try to blend in but not fit in. If you notice this to be the case then your Christian walk must be carefully evaluated. Reevaluating yourself and soul searching is not an easy process. It is difficult to learn to stand out and be different.

At first, learning to be called out is awkward. For example, here is a common situation. When a topic of discussion arises about something that you know is wrong, out of fear of mockery the first instinct is to stay silent without commenting instead of voicing what is right. This can and should only work for a short time. You can use this time to evaluate your environment, know what you are up against, and learn how you can counteract your enemies. But this should not last that long. Eventually you have to speak up. You have to earnestly pray for the grace of God to give you the courage to stand for his cause and the wisdom to know what to say and when to say it. Many times you begin to speak your differences, but learning to act upon them is also something different. People out in the world do not like it when someone stands out among the others, especially Biblically. Compared to life on a mission field, living the antithesis in a congregational circle where church

life is bountiful is easy. Every person you surround yourself with believes as you do. You walk with people who want to walk as you do. You have the support of other church members, elders, deacons, and the minister for spiritual guidance and direction. You don’t have to think about basic Christian issues because you grew up with them. On the mission field these issues are something never heard of, weird, and definitely not practiced.

There are many things one must get used to quickly. To be blunt, you are not surrounded with Christians, neither Protestant Reformed nor nominal Christians. Everyone you see, work with, and even bump into on the street live ungodly lives. They are profane, blatant, and unashamed about it. They are highly offensive. You do not want to see it, but you have to. Not only do you have to see it, but also you must be called out from among them. This is what you are up against and it is a big world out there. These ungodly do not want to be preached to. They do not want to hear that their lifestyle is wrong. They love living in their comfortable sin. This makes it highly difficult to witness. But one of the most noticeable witnesses a Christian can give, especially on a mission field, is his godly, straight and narrow walk. It

one of the most noticeable witnesses a Christian can give, especially on a mission field, is his godly, straight and narrow walk.

is highly effective and probably the most lasting impression one can give about living for Christ’s sake. Words, especially ones the ungodly do not want to hear, can easily go in one ear and out the other. But when you live differently from the world and the world sees it, that is what leaves a lasting impression about you and your personality. That is what the world talks about when they speak of you. Usually they speak evil of you. This is the normal reaction when someone stands out from “normal” worldly living. The words of Christ must be ever present when you are faced with this, “*Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be glad: for great is your reward in heaven...*” *Matthew 5:11-12*. This is the proof that your Christian walk is not only antithetical but also fruitful.

This is what keeps you going, the still small voice of the Lord Jesus. This is what is able to give you the strength to continue living antithetically. On a mission field living the antithesis is very real. This is what is dealt with on a daily basis. It is very difficult to deal with this. It is most stressful when the ones you want to teach the most are members of your own family. To be honest, practicing this can make you very weary, quickly.

Living antithetically means more than living a conservative life and looking down on those that are more liberal. On a mission field, issues such as conservatives, liberals, and Christian liberty are obsolete. It is the practical Christian ways of living that are the most important; when in the Christian circle these issues become the shadow of normal life. Living contrary to the world entails normal issues and beliefs that many Christians do not have to think about because it is normal not to do it. It means not taking the Lord's name in vain when every person you come in contact does as often as they use the word "the". It means not using foul language, not using foul language when someone cuts you off on the road, and not using foul body language, by means of hand gestures or other gestures. It means declining to go to a bar after work, or even during work, intentionally getting drunk as a recreational activity. It means publicly criticizing the intentional abuse of alcohol when given the opportunity.

In the workplace, it means having to work for people who seem like the worst of the reprobate. It means constantly hearing the most vile things come out of their mouths. While in the work place you cannot run and hide from it, but you can live contrary to it by refusing to speak the evil. That is what they see in you. "*An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire,*" *Proverbs 16:27*. You not only know this to be true but you really begin to understand what it means.

For single women living antithetically means dressing in a manner that does not intentionally cause a man to sin with his eyes. It means not intentionally acting toward a man flirtatiously for him to have lustful thoughts. It means not dating to rate your beauty by how many dates you can get in a week. It means not agreeing to have a major career in order to work to support herself so she does not need to depend on any man.

For married women it means that children are counted as a blessing instead of a burden. It means not looking down on housewives but actually building them up. It means not speaking up against a man as to show

authority. It means not getting married to what the world considers to be the perfect man who will cater to your every need. It means that the married woman is not the head of the home. This is a very difficult area to deal with. In secular living, women as 'housewives' are looked down upon or thought of as lazy unless they have a career or job in which they make as much or in many cases more than the husband does.

On Sunday living antithetically means church is first and foremost. It means we must not go to church on Saturday so you can go to a picnic on Sunday. It means not working on Sunday at all no matter how badly your boss needs you. It means not going out for brunch at Denny's with your family after church. It means not going to the grocery store for milk and bread when you don't have any in the house. It means not cutting the grass because you didn't have any time during the week to do it. It means not doing any kind of major cleaning around the house. Sunday is a large area where you can show your antithetical living. To the world this is the most difficult thing to swallow, Sunday is the Lord's Day.

**To the world this is the
most difficult thing to
swallow, Sunday is the
Lord's Day.**

Living antithetically also means not glorifying fornication or adultery. In the world this is a very offending issue that is everywhere. Fornication, in the world, is a sport. This entails a lot of gloating and the people involved are regarded as trophies. Marriage is thought of as a ball and chain instead of something good. You have to rack up as many trophies as you can before it is time to settle down. Some of the world's philosophies for adultery are "you can look but you can't touch, and it's not cheating unless you get caught." Living antithetically means speaking up against this strongly. This is another large area where antithetical living can be expressed.

These issues are things that are dealt with day in and day out. A Christian on a mission field does not get a break from this. These things are what make you different from the world. Constantly protesting these issues to their faces may not get you very far, but they do notice what you don't talk about, participate in, and what

becomes offensive to you. This is the honey that attracts the bees. When people begin to notice these differences, then you start to get quizzed. “Why” and “how come...” are questions that are used for topics of discussions instead of other things. Living antithetically, on a mission field, is most important for the growth of the mission group. If you are living worldly and preaching something else, the world will find you at fault and will bring it to your attention. Then your witnessing becomes even harder. Living antithetically also teaches you to witness

because you are called to have an answer for the “why’s” and “how come’s;” then suddenly witnessing becomes a little easier. *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear,” 1 Peter 3:15.* ❖

Kelli is currently living on the mission field in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Story Time

A Courageous Nurse

by J.P. de Klerk

Nelly Brennema woke up by the noise of trucks, cabs and busses driving past which came to her through the half open window of her room in a small hotel in London, this autumn morning.

What am I doing here actually, in this bed? Slowly her memory came back and she became aware of the fact that a lot of it she would have preferred to have forgotten. Pity, that her sleep was swept away. She got up and went a bit dizzy to the shower. Her body was still dog-tired, worn out, exhausted. She needed a breathing space.

Voluntarily Nelly had during the past two years assisted to take care of a big number of refugees, in an area alongside Pakistan and Afghanistan. She had applied in person at an office of the Red Cross, after she had been reading in a newspaper that nurses were needed, who were willing to help and relieve the misery of thousands of dislodged people. She had shown her certificates and diploma as a qualified nurse and she was sent to Pakistan very soon.

The poor people over there soon called her “Aunt Nelly” and they

helped each other to get a good communication. She always told the children stories out of the Bible, with drawings to explain it all better.

There were no men in the camps, except old invalids. Many of the women and children were sick, wounded and hungry. She did what she could and started every day already early in the morning.

She understood, that at the other side of the frontier there was fierce fighting going on already since several years. First there came the communists and then the fan-

natic Moslems who called themselves the “Taleban” army. The people she had to cope with were simply following the traditions of their tribes, or the “poerdag” as they called it. When the women left their tents, they had their bodies covered from head to foot with a black robe, which they called a “boerqag.” Some of the younger women had at first western dresses, but later that was no longer allowed by their mothers, who feared punishment by the “Taleban” spies amongst them.

They did not object against Nelly’s evangelism. She had to speak the language “Poestha,” which she soon managed to do, but the “Farsee”



language was too difficult for her to learn presently (spoken by intellectuals, sounds like a waterfall of strange sounds).

One day a wounded soldier on horseback came over the frontier. Nelly cleaned the wound, removed a bullet and bandaged his leg three times a day in the primitive field hospital she had opened. Fourteen days later he left and he gave away a lot of precious stones (which are found everywhere in Afghanistan and used by the rebels to buy weapons abroad); Nelly received also some. But, at the end of two years, the “Taleban” army scored the victory and they demanded all the refugees to go back to the villages in Afghanistan where they had come from.

Nelly wanted to go with them, but the general of the army told her that her services were no longer needed. Besides, he only wanted people for healthcare who were Moslems. He explained to her that the rules in his country were very strict, following the instructions given in the Koran and the Sharia of Mohammed.

Well, looking at the people passing by she prayed that the Lord would have mercy with them, guide and protect them. She had sown the seed of God’s Word in many hearts and all else that she could do... ❖

J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from Ashhurst, New Zealand.

Church News

Church News

BAPTISMS

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Samuel David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ed Huizing—Edmonton, Alberta
Jordan Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Decker—Georgetown, MI
Christian John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike DeVries—Georgetown, MI
Brittany Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Craig Scholten—Georgetown, MI
Noah Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Erin Windemuller—Grace, MI
Caitlyn Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Rick DeVries—Grace, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

“...and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Romans 10:10

Public profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:

Stacy Nowicki—Grace, MI
Jason Bodbyl—Holland, MI
Michelle Haan—Holland, MI
Eric Mowery—Holland, MI
Kristin Wassink—Holland, MI
Ross Wassink—Holland, MI
Ronda Van Voorthuysen—Redlands, CA
Darin Gritters—Redlands, CA
Candace Gritters—Redlands, CA
Kathleen Doezema—Southeast, MI
Rajini Van Farowe—Southeast, MI
Marcella Bodbyl—Southwest, MI
Jon Hanko—Southwest, MI
Sara Kuiper—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES

“...and they twain shall be one flesh.”

Matthew 19:5

United in the bonds of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Wayne Courtney and Miss Sarah Hanko—Covenant, N Ireland
Mr. Paul Kamps and Miss LaRae Huisken—Grandville, MI
Mr. Phil Baas and Miss Renae Lubbers—Grandville, MI
Mr. Ben Kortz and Miss Mary Holstege—Hudsonville, MI
Mr. Tim VerStrate and Miss Christy Hoekstra—Hudsonville, MI
Mr. Matt Regnerus and Miss Melissa Hoksbergen—Hull, IA
Mr. Joel Hoksbergen and Miss Joy Joostens—Lynden, WA
Mr. Travis Maas and Miss Mary Boonstra—Lynden, WA
Mr. Dan Howerzyl and Miss Dawn VanUffelen—Redlands, CA
Mr. Tyler Pipe and Miss Michelle Streyle—Southeast, MI

A Beautiful View

"The weather forecast for tomorrow calls for—"

Klsh-sh-z-z.

"There will only be you-u-u—"

Klsh-sh-z-z.

"Crime statistics show that—"

Klsh-sh-z-z.

"Daniel, put the radio down! It's too loud," said Mother.

"Okay," said Daniel. He turned the volume down, but kept turning the dial. Riding in the van was getting pretty boring, even if it was vacation. And they had a long way to go. Maybe some good music would help.

Klsh-sh-z-z.

"The devil spoiled God's plan. He was able to get Adam and Eve to sin. Now what could God do? He would have to send His Son..."

"Is that true?" said Tracy.

"That's a very good question," said Dad. "We can't believe everything we hear on the radio. Do you think it's true?"

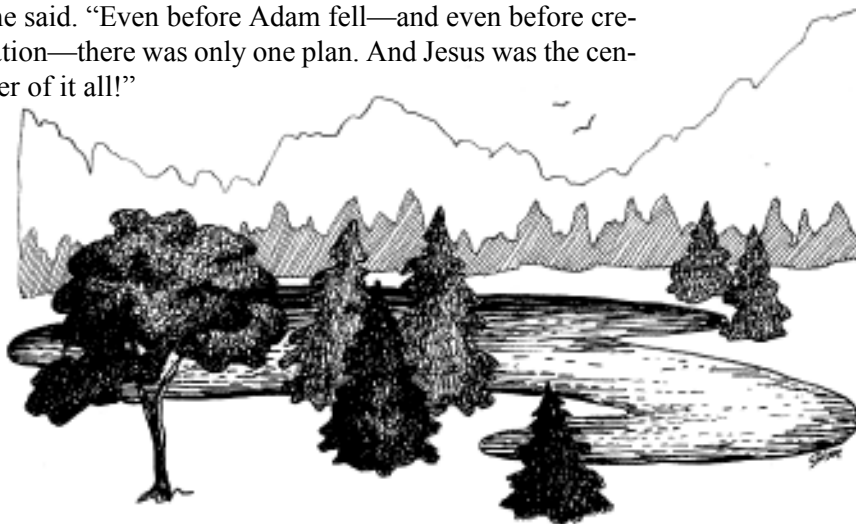
Tracy looked at Daniel, but Daniel wasn't giving her any clues. In fact, he was wondering too. "I just don't know," she finally said.

"Let me ask you this," said Dad. "Is it possible for God's plan to be spoiled? Can anything ever happen that is outside of His control?"

"He wouldn't be much of a God if His plan could be spoiled," said Daniel.

"Yea," added Tracy, "then His next plan to send Jesus could be spoiled, too. That would be scary."

Dad turned the steering wheel and the family van picked up speed and rode onto the highway. "Exactly," he said. "Even before Adam fell—and even before creation—there was only one plan. And Jesus was the center of it all!"



"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

They rounded another curve and a lush forest valley and lake came into view. Mother took her sunglasses off. "How beautiful!" she exclaimed. "What a contrast to the plain brick buildings of the city."

Dad smiled. "What a contrast between a god who has to make new plans, and a God Who is truly God."

Klsh-sh-z-z.

"Up next, a piece by Bach played by..."

"Ah, let's leave it there, Daniel," said Mom.

"Okay," said Daniel. He settled into his seat and began to enjoy the view. Tracy opened her backpack and passed some treats out to everyone. Maybe the trip wouldn't be so boring after all. ❖

Connie is the mother of 5 children and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Find the underlined words in the puzzle below:

"For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him" Colossians 1:16.

C	E	L	Y	I	S	S	O	L	P
O	W	D	E	T	A	E	R	C	A
L	D	O	M	I	N	I	O	N	S
O	T	H	R	E	H	T	E	H	W
S	F	O	R	T	H	I	N	G	S
S	L	N	P	R	E	L	A	D	E
I	L	B	O	M	I	A	L	L	V
A	R	N	W	L	N	P	B	C	N
N	E	A	E	D	E	I	R	O	E
S	H	F	R	A	S	C	S	I	V
A	Y	N	S	I	V	N	O	M	A
L	T	B	V	I	S	I	B	L	E
D	C	N	L	E	A	R	T	H	H
P	I	R	H	O	T	P	V	A	D

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